

Remarks of Commissioner Mignon Clyburn (as prepared)
Net Neutrality and the Economy: How the FCC's Rules Promote Investment, Create Jobs
and Protect Consumers
Open Technology Institute
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Thank you Sarah, not only for that kind introduction, but for inviting me to be a part of today's conversation on Net Neutrality and the Economy. Making the business case is a theme, many of you have heard me repeat in recent months. And despite the rhetoric to the contrary, robust net neutrality rules are good for the economy. They not only provide certainty, they help to promote investment and innovation, create avenues for greater access to goods and services, and make it possible for millions of Americans to enjoy limitless social, educational, and economic opportunities. This is why it is so noteworthy that you have gathered such an impressive line-up of presenters, not only to speak about the consumer benefits, which are the most important aspect, but to allow this business major to find her inner geek, by touching on the business case as well.

I am reminded of a timeless saying: "The customer is always right." It was popularized in 1909 by Harry Gordon Selfridge, the founder of Selfridge's department store in London, and its relevance when it comes to today's discussion, is two-fold: First, it reminds customers they should *get* good service, when they patronize a business; and second, it re-emphasizes to those employees, that job number one is to *give* good service to those customers. Part of this dual goal of *giving* and *getting*, is the exchange of those goods and services. And even without a background in banking, finance, and economics, the concept of giving customers what they want, and how they want it, is a common-sense good business practice.

Many of the most successful tech companies, have been built on anticipating and understanding customer needs, even before that potential customer realizes what they want, need, or how it should be packaged. And what is so amazing about an open internet, is that it has allowed thousands of new market entrants, to compete and thrive. Take Amazon, and its successful introduction of internet shopping, as well as the recent fall in value, of grocery store stock prices, when they announced their proposed acquisition of Whole Foods. And think of how the internet video market has been revolutionized, with the subsequent fall of the Blockbuster business model. Dozens of companies that did not even exist a decade ago, are now fixtures, thanks to an open internet.

So it is not only shocking, but it is distressing, given the success of such an amazing, empowering framework, that we are on the cusp of seeing many of our most impressive and innovative gains, at risk. The promise of a future filled with internet fast lanes, available only to businesses big enough to pay for them, may just be a few months away from being a reality, and as for the next generation of startup wunderkinds, they may be foiled before they even have a chance to thrive. This is why business major geeks like me, and movers and shakers with multiple disciplines like you, must support, and push for an environment, which encourages seamless entry, and limitless success of smaller players, and of everyday people, who have

always been the economic backbone of our nation. They are the ones on the cutting edge of innovation, they are the ones bolstering job opportunities and investments in their communities, and they are the ones who would be most harmed by the Destroying Internet Freedom NPRM. Collectively, we have no other option, but to make sure that no one with a dream, with the drive and the talent, gets priced out of a seat on the innovation and opportunities train.

Through the efforts of so many in this room, we were able to reach a point in 2015, that so many thought was not possible – we adopted robust, legally-sustainable open internet rules – and while I will be quick to concede that the journey ahead may be more difficult because of the shifts in the political and policy landscape, that does not mean for one second, that we should abandon ship. Millions of consumers, entrepreneurs, school children, and seniors, for which the word “title” means the possession of a car or boat, are depending on us to support Title II, which is the only sustainable way for us all to realize, the benefit of real net neutrality rules.

Will all of our efforts guarantee us a win when it comes to a vote? Maybe not, but the arc of success is bent in our favor and we are on the right side of history. I am heartened that at the very beginning of the latest FCC process, we have already seen another five million speak out. And as significant as that is, it still may not be enough. We must go broader, and deeper, form coalitions and interest groups, have discussions and town halls, about what all of this means to everyday people and communities large and small, and how we can never take any of this for granted. Our most important and precious protections, and the principles on which they are built, are at stake, and we can ill-afford to sit idly by, or get tired as they are sacrificed at the altar of small government and large business interests. You are in the most unique position to do just that. I am in a unique position to do just that. Together, united, we are the force, that will ensure that those First Amendment principles, that distinguish this great nation from so many around the globe, applies to a platform that is the most inclusive and empowering of our time.

Don’t get tired, and don’t get discouraged. And I will say it again: The arc of history, is bent in our favor. Thank you again.